

Not everyone is a candidate for clozapine, or Clozaril. In fact, in most states, this medication is reserved for those who do not respond to the few other new generation antipsychotic medications that have since come on the market. Although the new atypicals often produce superior outcomes by treating a broader range of schizophrenia symptoms, they are different from one another; some people respond to one antipsychotic but not another. Side-effect profiles, which differ among these medications, have a significant effect on adherence....and non-adherence has major risks, including death.

Unfortunately, the new atypical medications that are on the market all have a serious side-effect in common--that of weight gain. Weight gain---and I'm not talking about just a little bit---is a serious problem. It affects adherence, morbidity and quality of life. Because of its different characteristics, ziprasidone is likely to be an important new addition in the small arsenal of effective new generation medications for schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders.

NAMI members believe that professional judgment and informed consumer choice should determine the choice of medications to treat mental illnesses. However, it is essential that we have more choices; NAMI supports the research that makes these choices possible.

We understand that you have judgments to make about risks and benefits of medications in reaching a decision about approval. We would ask that you be sure to consider the full range of risks and benefits in making that judgment. Absent clear evidence of a substantial risk, we would ask that you make the available information about benefits and risks available and allow professional judgment and consumer choice to weigh these rather different drugs against one another to reach individual decisions about treatment.

Disclosure statement:

NAMI (the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill) is a nonprofit, grassroots, self-help, support and advocacy organization of consumers, families, and friends of people with severe mental illnesses, including schizophrenia, major depression, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety disorders, and the major childhood mental illnesses. Founded in 1979, NAMI has more than 210,000 consumers and family members who seek equitable services, expanded research, and improved

treatments for people with severe mental illnesses.

In addition to support from membership dues and contributions, NAMI is supported indirectly, through the NAMI Anti-Stigma Foundation, by unrestricted educational grants from companies in both the pharmaceutical and managed care industries. NAMI has a strict policy of not endorsing specific products. Neither Pfizer nor its competitors have had input into our testimony.